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MISCELLANEA.

THE EGYPTIAN HISTORIAN AND POET ABRAHAM
BAR HILLEL.

THE very fact that we know so little of the history of Jewish literature in Egypt should induce us to pay all the greater regard to every production emanating from the apparently inexhaustible contents of the *Genisot*. At any rate, the notion that the names of Saadiah, who emigrated from that country, and of Maimuni, who immigrated there, are the only noteworthy ones among Egypt's literary celebrities, has already been discarded. Thus far, the Egyptian fragments consisted of the contents from works, the origins of which had to be sought for outside the country. But Dr. Neubauer's latest publication (*J. Q. R.* VIII, 541 sqq.) refers to the products of Egyptian Jews born and bred on the soil, in which, nevertheless, historical research and Hebrew poetry are equally represented.

However hazardous it may be to offer an opinion about Abraham bar Hillel's Megilla without an examination of the MS., I cannot repress the conjecture that only a small portion of this new source of history has been preserved, and that we have not only mutilated fragments, but in these latter foreign matter has also strayed. I cannot help thinking that the passage from p. 547, l. 17 to p. 548, l. 2 from the bottom, strayed into our Megilla, say, from something like Charisi's Tachkemoni. So much is certain, that, as matters stand, no historical date can be evolved therefrom with any amount of certainty. However, although the original form of this source had to suffer many changes, the little that has been preserved to us suffices to enable us to draw conclusions as to the study of history and the facility in using the style of Hebrew *Makames*.

But Abraham bar Hillel could not only skilfully handle *Makames*, he was also an expert in the more difficult forms of versification. He left us, at the end of his Megilla, a specimen of his poetry, a clear proof of the Spanish poetry's influence on the Egyptian Jews, which only requires to be transcribed in the form intended by the author,

to make a restoration of the text, corrupted in numerous instances, possible by the guidance of the metre. Neither Mr. Wertheimer nor Dr. Neubauer regarded this circumstance, but had the poem "run on" equally with the other part of the Megilla. I therefore reproduce Abraham bar Hillel's verses in a pure and correct form :

אהה לזמן הנחותיו חשבן • ושמחותיו באנחותיו הפכן
 וטובותיו ברע[ו] תיו דחפן • וכוסותיו בראש פתן מסכן
 והוליד כל ימותיו הנעימים • אחרנית ועיות מהלכן
 וזה דרכו אבל הוסיף תלאות • בכל שבר ושוד לא אעריך
 מסרנו ביד רועה אוילי • חמור¹ נוער להושיבו בדוכן
 שמו זוטא אשר חטא והחט[ו]א² • וכל ארחות מתועבות דרכן
 והחשך בפניו שם מעונו³ • והאופל בעיניו נח ושכן⁴
 ולו יביט בפניי האפילם⁵ • ולו בפני מאורות החשיכן
 ולו בקש יהי⁶ רועה אתונות • אזי בו מאנו להיות נסיכן
 ולו יהיה בכלבי הכשבים • אזי בו מאסו להיות בתוכן
 ובא לקח במסרתו למשרת⁷ • קהלות אל ולהרג⁸ משכן
 והוליד⁹ בן פריץ חיות כצלמו • וכדמותו וירידי הוא סמכן
 עלי ראשו וראש אביו¹⁰ יחילון • דמי נפשות נקיים ששפכן
 ודמו כי בדמים יחזיקום • ידי מלכות ויושיבון עלי כן¹¹
 והשיב אל עלי ראשם עמלם • וכתנן עלי עקב נשכן
 והוא עשה לרב יצחק צחוק עם • קהלותיו ובצלליו סככן
 והסיר מעלי שבעם חרפות • ורגליהן במעגליו תמכן
 וחברתי מגלה זו בענין • ימי פורים [ו]ב[מגילת]¹² ממוכן
 ושירה זו תהי לעד ערוכה • בפי שרים ושרות עם חניכן
 ועוכר זה בעכרו עם ישורון • עכרו¹³ אל בזה היום כעכן

¹ In former editions איל והמור.

² וְהַחֲשֵׁא.

ש.ף מעוני ³

⁴ נדחשכז.

בפניו האפלים⁵

⁶ יהיה.

⁷ למסרה, and he went to keep by his delatorship the regiment of the Lord's communities.

⁸ אלו להרג.

9. והוליד.

¹⁰ וראש אביו correctly in e.

¹¹ And they [sc. the father and the son] fancied that the hands of the Government would protect them by money, and reinstate them in their former position.

¹² ומגילת.

¹³ בעברו עם ישורון עברו.

That this is the conclusion of the poem is certain, because it is followed by the sign of the end of the Megilla. Namely, the words **תמה ושלום**, which appear in the MSS., must be retained; they mean only that the Megilla is here at an end. **שלום** is the well-known formula of greeting, the Megilla being considered a letter. The following **לבעצרהם** means here, as usually in Arabic collections of poems, that the following verse belongs to another poet; in this case to Samuel Hanagid. The date on the MS. indicates therefore only the time when this copy was written, but in no way refers to the time in which the events, described in the Megilla, took place.

Samuel Hanagid's verse was not, it seems, placed by chance at the end of the Megilla. Rather is it evident, that the writer mistook the verse for one of the Egyptian Nagid Samuel b. Chananya, who was frequently confounded in Egypt with the Spanish Nagid Samuel. Such confusion of these two persons explains also Joseph Sambari's assumptions, that Samuel Hanagid's introduction, quoted already by Abraham ibn Daûd, was the work of the Egyptian, and that Samuel b. Chananya had come to Egypt from Spain¹.

Karlsbad.

D. KAUFMANN.

THE EGYPTIAN SUTTA-MEGILLA.

IN order to understand the historical contents of the Egyptian Megilla, brought to light by Mr. Wertheimer and Dr. Neubauer, we are compelled to assume that a number of leaves are missing, which bore upon several passages in the text where the want of continuity was not observed by the editors. Thus, the very beginning of the narrative proper, in which Samuel Hanagid's princely liberality seems to have been mentioned, is missing. For it is impossible that Samuel should have suddenly made his appearance, like a *deus ex machina*, as we see him do in our text, p. 545, last line but one; some mention of, and narrative about him must have preceded. But in that way, Mardochai, who was assumed by Dr. Neubauer to have been Samuel's predecessor and Nagid of Egypt (p. 553), disappears altogether from the scene. Mardochai is Samuel Hanagid himself, of

¹ Comp. Kaufmann, *Monatsschrift*, 40, 417.